

Agency 471

State Conservation Commission**Recommendation Summary**

Dollars in Thousands

	Annual FTEs	General Fund State	Other Funds	Total Funds
2003-05 Expenditure Authority	12.8	4,487	2,422	6,909
Total Maintenance Level	12.3	4,269	2,197	6,466
Difference	(.5)	(218)	(225)	(443)
Percent Change from Current Biennium	(3.9)%	(4.9)%	(9.3)%	(6.4)%
Performance Changes				
General Inflation		(5)	(4)	(9)
Sustaining Conservation Operations #		210		210
Supporting Local Accountability			62	62
Professional Engineering Grants Program			300	300
Livestock Nutrient Assistance			1,600	1,600
Subtotal		205	1,958	2,163
Total Proposed Budget	12.3	4,474	4,155	8,629
Difference	(.5)	(13)	1,733	1,720
Percent Change from Current Biennium	(3.9)%	(0.3)%	71.6%	24.9%
Total Proposed Budget by Activity				
Conservation District Audits			190	190
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)	1.5	1,900		1,900
Technical Assistance Grants				
Direct Technical Assistance	3.8		528	528
District Basic Funding Grants	.3	1,454		1,454
Grant Administration	6.2	1,090	17	1,107
Professional Engineering Grants	.5		1,800	1,800
Landowner Education and Assessment			1,600	1,600
Compensation Cost Adjustment		30	20	50
Total Proposed Budget	12.3	4,474	4,155	8,629

PERFORMANCE LEVEL CHANGE DESCRIPTIONS**Sustaining Conservation Operations #**

Contingent on the passage of agency-request legislation amending the state's conservation district statute, one-time funding is provided for supplementary basic funding allocations to the state's lowest-income conservation districts. Most conservation districts receive the bulk of their annual funding from externally-funded grants tied to specific conservation projects. Additional basic funding will be used for such items as general education and outreach, local salmon recovery and water quality planning processes, basic administrative costs, and grant-writing. Except for reductions made in the early 1990s, the amount budgeted for this function has not changed in the last ten years.

Supporting Local Accountability

The State Auditor conducts financial and legal compliance audits of the state's 48 local conservation districts, and state law requires each district to be audited at least every three years. Funding will reimburse the State Auditor for the increased cost of audits scheduled to be conducted during the 2005-07 Biennium. (Water Quality Account-State)

Professional Engineering Grants Program

Professional engineering grants enable conservation districts to make engineering services available and affordable to private landowners who wish to implement natural resource conservation plans, and water-quality or habitat-improvement projects. Typical work performed by district engineers includes permitting, designing, and construction oversight. One-time funding is provided to address an estimated backlog of 50-60 projects in need of engineering review, thereby reducing the turnaround time from approval of project financing to project completion. (Water Quality Account-State)

Livestock Nutrient Assistance

One-time funding is provided for conservation districts to assist owners and operators of medium- and large-sized animal feeding operations and concentrated animal feeding operations in developing nutrient management plans. These operators must meet and stay in compliance with new federal water-quality standards beginning December 2006. This funding will also enable conservation districts to reach out with information and educational efforts to 1,000 smaller-scale livestock producers. (Water Quality Account-State)

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTIONS

Conservation District Audits

This activity supplies funding to cover the costs of the State Auditor's Office (SAO) to audit the state's 48 conservation districts. Conservation districts are legal subdivisions of state government, and these audits ensure that grants to the districts are spent in compliance with state laws.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Technical Assistance Grants

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a federal-state partnership created in 1998. It is a voluntary, streamside restoration program to enhance salmon habitat on agricultural lands by removing land from production and planting native trees and shrubs so that bank stabilization and other important ecological functions occur. Grants issued to 33 conservation districts statewide provide technical expertise in developing and implementing planting plans; help prepare required paperwork; and provide follow-up to ensure the survival of plantings. The program also has a capital component that is the state's match for installation and maintenance costs (the state pays 10 percent of installation costs and 100 percent of maintenance costs for five years).

Direct Technical Assistance

This activity includes providing regular training to staff in 48 conservation districts and to 500 conservation district Board of Supervisor volunteers. This aid strengthens public accountability and ensures that laws, rules, and procedures are being followed in the provision of services to citizens. Commission staff assist districts with a wide variety of issues, including organizational development, facilitation, personnel recruitment and management, financial planning, and local involvement. The Commission also ensures that the Board of Supervisor election and appointment processes are in accordance with commission procedures and RCW 89.08. The Commission coordinates stakeholder involvement on statewide issues relating to private landowner resources and helps identify statewide priorities in the natural resources arena.

District Basic Funding Grants

In 1989 the Legislature provided a basic level of funding for each conservation district. Grants are provided annually to each of the state's conservation districts for those basic administrative functions necessary to achieve water quality and natural resource preservation goals.

Grant Administration

The Conservation Commission has 332 active grant contracts. The grant administration activity consists of writing contracts, negotiating the scope of work, monitoring the activity, evaluating and reimbursing allowable expenses, and ensuring adherence to state laws. Additional administration activities include reviewing each district's administration of grants, and participating in stakeholder task forces/committees to provide for project evaluation and funding recommendations. All activities, including some capital projects not listed, are managed under this activity and the Direct Technical Assistance Activity.

Professional Engineering Grants

Through grants awarded to conservation districts, private engineers are hired to provide services to a group of conservation districts. These grants have allowed nine professional engineers to serve all 48 conservation districts at a much lower cost than by contracting for services or providing an engineer for each district. Through this coordinated effort, engineering services are available to private landowners to implement their natural resources conservation plans and ensure that projects meet required engineering standards.

Landowner Education and Assessment

An assessment tool will be developed to assist landowners with livestock to determine the application of the Livestock Nutrient Management Act (RCW 90.64) at their facility. This assessment tool will define the elements of an "animal feeding operation," a "confined animal feeding operation," and any necessary changes that might need to occur with their facility. The tool enables the conservation districts and landowners to evaluate the water quality risks and compliance measures necessary to protect the natural resources.

Compensation Cost Adjustment

This item reflects proposed compensation and benefit cost adjustments that were not allocated to individual agency activities. The agency will assign these costs to the proper activities after the budget is enacted.